

**Remarks**

The Examiner has rejected claim 29 under 35 USC 112 second paragraph as being indefinite, since it is unclear whether or not the carrier is intended to be lignin or synthetic polymer as claim 28 states that the carrier is lignin but claim 29, which depends on claim 28, states that the carrier is one of a group of synthetic thermal plastics. In addressing this rejection, the Applicant has amended claim 29 to be dependent on independent claim 26. Review and acceptance is requested.

Claims 26 through 32, 37 through 49, and 51 through 53 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell '754 in view of Vaidya '064, Jaschke '107 and Beninga '606. Claim 33 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Flood '870 in view of Vaidya. Claims 34 through 36 and 50 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell, Vaidya, Jaschke et. al. and Beninga as applied to claims 26 and 43, in further view of Valle '910. Claims 37 through 42 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hartzell, Vaidya, Jaschke and Beninga as applied to claim 26, in further view of Ogata '969.

In responding to these rejections, the Applicant has amended independent claims 26 and 43 to recite a carrier comprising a natural thermoplastic or a polymer blend of natural thermoplastic polymer with a synthetic thermoplastic and with at least two decorative layers pressed into and bonded with the carrier without the use of glue. The recitations of a thermoelastic polymer have been cancelled. Claims 26

and 43 are distinguished from the prior art of record for the following reasons.

The establishment of a prima facie case of obviousness requires the USPTO to research prior art references which alone or in combination teach or suggest all the claim limitations. Moreover, there must be some motivation for combining references and some reasonable expectation of success (MPEP 2143). With regard to the invention as claimed, the limitation of pressing and bonding the two decorative layers to the thermoplastic polymer carrier without the use of glue is missing from the prior art of record. In particular, with respect to the composite body of claim 26, the functional language in this claim specifying that the two decorative layers are pressed into and bonded with the carrier results in structural changes in the carrier, since the material of the carrier must be displaced by the pressed layers and since the bonding results in changes in the molecular structure at the surface of the carrier. Therefore, this functional language recites structural limitations. These comments also apply to method claim 43. The only reference of record which teaches the bonding of two elements together without the use of glue is that of Beninga '606. However, this reference teaches the introduction of aluminum ceramic components into a natural or synthetic rubber carrier. The '606 reference does not teach a carrier made from a thermoplastic polymer, rather the rubber carrier of the '606 reference is elastic or duroplastic. This is evident, since the rubber is vulcanized (cross-linked) ('606 column 2, lines 73 to 75). Moreover, the aluminum ceramic bodies are not pressed into the rubber carrier, rather are molded within the carrier ('606 column 2, lines 73 to 75). Since the materials joined by Beninga and the manner

in which those materials are joined are both different from the invention as claimed, the Beninga reference neither teaches the limitations nor provides motivation that the claimed structural limitations can be achieved in the manner recited. This is particularly the case, since the preferred embodiment of Beninga recommends the introduction of an intermediate bonding layer between the ceramic bodies and the rubber base for better adhesion (see abstract last lines thereof).

The dependent claims inherit the limitations of their respective base claim and are therefore similarly distinguished from the prior art of record for the reasons given.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the instant application is sufficiently distinguished from the prior art of record to satisfy the conditions for patenting in the United States and thereby requests passage to issuance.

No new matter has been added in this amendment.

10

Respectfully submitted,

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